

Iakovos D. Michailidis¹

IRREDENTISM AND POLICY: FYROM OFFICIAL STATE PAPERS, 1944-2006

On 2 August 1944, to mark the 41st anniversary of the Ilinden Uprising, the Anti-Fascist Council of Makedonija [AFCM]² met at the Monastery of Prohor Ptchinski, near Kumanovo. It was this Meeting that paved the way for the founding of the People's Republic of Makedonija and the Republic's inclusion in the Yugoslav Federation. The Meeting acknowledged the right of the 'Macedonian People' to self-determination, and declared the anniversary of the Ilinden Uprising a national festival. From that day to this, the PRM, or SRM [Socialist Republic of Makedonija], as it was renamed a few years later, or FYROM as it became at the start of the 1990s after the break-up of Yugoslavia as a unit, has faithfully stuck to certain ideological principles, most of which have had to do with Greece.

The present work proposes to highlight FYROM's irredentist policy towards Greece from 1944 to the present, a policy that is in flagrant breach of the Interim Agreement signed by the two parties in 1995 expressly calling on them to put an end to any mutual expressions of irredentism.³ There is one basic premise that has been consistently ignored both by the international community in general and by most of the interested parties. What FYROM mainly relies on, not just for its prolongation or its development, but for its very existence, is its irredentist ambitions at Greece's expense. Should these ambitions collapse, FYROM would be hard pressed to even survive. We shall examine the issues involved under three main headings, which put in a nutshell our neighbouring country's political and ideological principles over the years:

1) Renaming Greek Macedonia 'Aegean Macedonia', and representing it as *terra irredenta*, as an integral part of FYROM.

2) Claiming the existence of an oppressed 'Macedonian minority' within Greece.

3) Appropriating emblems and symbols, and the Greek cultural legacy in general (with Ancient Macedonia as the focal point).

The Society of Macedonian Studies has set up a research project, under the supervision of Professor John Koliopoulos, who teaches history at the

1. Iakovos D. Michailidis is Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary History in the History & Archaeology Department of the Philosophy Faculty of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

2. AFCM was the political wing of the Communist armed resistance movement active in Yugoslav Makedonija during the German-Bulgarian Occupation.

3. [*Irredentism* (the correct form): a collective policy of seeking, by word or action, to achieve that one's country of origin shall have restored to it territory which it has meantime lost to a neighbouring country. An individual pursuing this policy is an *irredentist*. The lost territory itself is termed *irredenta*, 'unredeemed'. The origin of this series of terms was in Italy during the late 1870s, when it was hoped to annex to the new Italian state territories that had formerly been Italian. *Translator's Note*].

University of Thessaloniki, in order to document these three lines of argument. A group of scholars, as Research Fellows of the Society, have studied a whole series of official documents of state, including parliamentary minutes, official speeches by government officials, and party political charters and manifestoes, school textbooks, writings by historians, and Internet sites, spanning from 1944 to the present day. Auxiliary unofficial documents used are those of non-governmental bodies and organizations (particularly of an irredentist kind), but only insofar as they relate to official state policy discourse. We have not for the time being concerned ourselves with independent action by private organizations: the project has confined itself to investigating how FYROM's apparatus of state jumped on the irredentist bandwagon.

With regard to things as they stand today, careful scrutiny of the sources mentioned above is enough to show that although aggressive phrasing has been ironed out of FYROM's Constitution, although the Sun of Vergina has been dropped from the official national flag, in consequence of the Interim Agreement, and although the phrasing used in the international forum is now studiously diplomatic, irredentist language is still widespread throughout the political fabric of the country. A contributory factor is the way young people are taught, particularly at primary and secondary school. No historian can hope to offer a solution, a 'magic bullet', that will deal with both sides' problems; and in any case, even were there such a solution, it is beyond the ambit of the academic community. Political problems – such as the Athens-Skopje dispute – call for purely political solutions. All that need be said is that when details, data, and arguments from history are employed and frequently appealed to by all the parties involved, we, as specialists in this field, have an obligation to supply Greeks and the international community at large with the essential information that will (we hope) enable them to understand the individual parameters of a complex situation and aid the dialogue by putting forward their own productive views.

Irredentist 'Aegean Macedonia'

This claim is a common one found in many of the sources. Impressively resistant to time, it is the most serious proposition in FYROM's irredentist propaganda. Note that it could not have been put forward before 1940, since this use of the term 'Macedonia' had not yet been invented: the term in use, Vardarska Banovina [Vardar Province], denoted the South Serbian districts.

The first occurrence of the term is in the founding manifesto of AFCM (already cited). Here the unification of 'Macedonia', based on the right of self-determination, was a primary goal: *'It is essential that we unite the whole Macedonian people of the three parts of Macedonia into one Macedonian state... Macedonians from Greek and Bulgarian Macedonia must follow the example of Macedonians in Yugoslav Macedonia'*.



▲ Yugoslav stamp, 1939, with the legend 'Vardarska' [Banovina] for the southern part of Serbia.

This goal was not just praiseworthy ambition on the part of the local leadership of the SRM [the Socialist Republic of Makedonija] it reflected, every so often, the party line of the Federal Yugoslav Government. In the period from immediately after the Allies' liberation of the Balkans from the Axis Powers in the last months of 1944 to the end of the Greek Civil War in 1949, there was a spate of official Yugoslav irredentist *pronunciamenti* against Greece. Significantly, only a month or two after the AFCM Manifesto, during the first session of AVNOJ [the Anti-Fascist Council for the Liberation of Yugoslavia] in Belgrade [9-12 November 1944], General Vukmanović, known as Tempo, representing PRM [the People's Republic of Makedonija], claimed that 'Macedonians' living in Greek and Bulgarian Macedonia were eagerly awaiting union with the mother republic. Timed to coincide with the session, a letter of protest (published in the newspaper *Politika* for 13 November) from ANVOJ's Vice-President Dimitar Vlahov to the Greek Prime Minister accused Greece of 'imperialist' policy against her northern neighbour, and of oppression of the 'Macedonian Anti-Fascists of Aegean Macedonia'.⁴

The oneness of the 'Macedonians' was clearly marked on wall maps in various buildings in PRM; Thessaloniki appeared as the Macedonian

4. Public Record Office, War Office [henceforward PRO/WO] 204/9677, Classified Report from British Military Mission to Belgrade, 14 November 1944, Call No.CB-2694.

capital.⁵ Interviewed for the *New York Times* early in April 1945, Josip Broz Tito, president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, said that though his country had no territorial claims on Greece, there was nothing to prevent the possible wish of Macedonians to unite.⁶ On 22 July 1945, Belgrade also sent a protest note to Athens,⁷ accusing Greece of the 'persecution' of 'our Macedonian compatriots' in 'Aegean Macedonia' by parastatal groups and by state authorities as well. Belgrade called for these people to be granted human rights and for unimpeded return of the refugees to their homes.⁸ On 11 October 1945, in a speech at Skopje during celebrations of the fourth anniversary of the Yugoslav resistance against the Fascist Occupation, and in front of thousands of people including refugees from Greece, Tito himself said that Yugoslavia would never renounce '*the right of the Macedonian people to unite*'. There were (he said) '*our brethren in Aegean Macedonia, to whose fate we are not indifferent. Our thoughts are with them, and we care about them*'. He ended: '*I promise you that all Macedonians will one day be united in their own community, Macedonia*'.⁹

But this was not to be the end of the Yugoslavian crescendo of protest against Greece. In a speech to the Constituent Assembly of Yugoslavia, on 26 January 1946, Bane Andrejev spent a good deal of time talking about Greek '*terrorizing*' of Slav speakers within Greece, emphasizing that the latter should '*go on with their fight for freedom*'.¹⁰ At the same time, Andrejev insisted that for Greek and Bulgarian Macedonia to unite with PRM was no act of hegemony but the consummation of the Macedonian legitimate demand for union.¹¹ Similar was the tenor of a speech by the veteran Communist activist Dimitar Vlahov, leader between the two World Wars of the United VMRO. He referred at great length to areas not yet incorporated into the Yugoslavian Federation. He also had something to say about the situation in Greek Macedonia, where (according to him) there were 129 'terrorist groups' working to annihilate Slav speakers. Vlahov ended by advocating the formation of a united Macedonia within the Federation.¹²

5. Historical Archive of the Greek Foreign Ministry [henceforward IAYE] 1945, File 59/2, Commander Superior, Special Security Office of the Supreme Command of the West Macedonia Gendarmerie, Col. P. Anastasopoulos, 'Information Bulletin'. Kozani. 29 May 1945. Call No. 12/1/6.

6. Records of the U.S. Department of State [henceforward DS]. Greece 1945-1949, 868.00/4-3045, Reel No.2, Office. To Greek Foreign Ministry. Athens, 30 April 1945, Call No. Emb. 1154. See also *Nέα Αλήθεια*, 24 April 1945.

7. DS Greece 1945-1949, 868.00/7-2445, Reel No. 3, Telegram from Kirk to the State Department, Caserta, 24 July 1945, Call No. Emp. 3046 The contents of this Note were published in the Greek newspapers at the beginning of September: see *Μακεδονία*, 2 September 1945.

8. Public Record Office, Foreign Office [henceforward PRO/FO] 371/48389, The Yugoslav Note to Greece is attached to Caccia's reply to the Foreign Office, Athens, 24 July 1945, Call No. 373.

9. Halkias Archive, 'Parts of Tito's speech at Skopje on 11 October 1945'. See also *Μακεδονία*, 14 October 1945, See also *Ελληνικόν Θάρρος*, 25 November 1945, *Ελληνικός Βορράς*, 25 November 1945, with photo of the final paragraph of Tito's speech. See also A. Κυρου, *Η συνωμοσία εναντίον της Μακεδονίας* [The conspiracy against Macedonia] 1940-1949 (Athens, 1950, in Greek), p. 143.

10. PRO/FO 371/58615, Stevenson to the Foreign Office, Belgrade, 22 January 1946, Call No. 125.

11. Andrejev's speech was published in the 20 February 1946 issue of *Билтен* (Билтен). See G.Modis, *Σχέδια και Ορέξεις γειτόνων* [Neighbours' Plans and Appetites], Thessaloniki, 1947, pp. 17-18.

12. PRO/FO 371/58615, Stevenson to Foreign Office, Belgrade, 22 January 1946, Call No. 124.

At the beginning of April 1946, Dimitar Vlahov made a speech at Monastir, present day Bitola, about 'Aegean Macedonia', expressing the longings of the 'Macedonian' people. His local audience was swelled by a thousand or so refugee Slavophones [speakers of any Slavonic language] from Greek Macedonia.¹³ The Parliamentary Vice-President called on them to continue devoting their labour to the work of renewing and rebuilding Yugoslavia.¹⁴ On 26 April 1946, Col. Pečo Trajkov, Skopje's army commander, gave an interview to a Toronto newspaper in which he said that PRM had indeed been incorporated into the Yugoslav Federation, but that this was not the end of the matter. Goče Delčev's slogans of '*a complete and united republic*' still rang in their ears (he said); and this would be achieved by uniting 'Pirin Macedonia' and 'Aegean Macedonia' (regarded by Trajkov as 'occupied territory') with PRM itself.¹⁵

On 2 July 1946 the Congress of the 'Union of Macedonian Women' was held in Skopje. Ourania Perovski, as representative of refugee women from Greece, made a reference to the peoples of 'Aegean Macedonia' who (she said) still languished under '*monarchist-fascist terrorism*'.¹⁶ The celebrations of Ilinden began on this very same day in Skopje, as did the 1st Congress of the Macedonian Popular Front. Among the VIPs taking part were Lazar Količevski, the President of the People's Republic of Makedonija; M. Nesković, the President of the Republic of Serbia; and the Federal Minister of Justice, Frane Frol. There were also delegations from Pirin Macedonia, headed by the Bulgarian parliamentary deputy Hristo Stoichev; and delegates from Greek Macedonia and from Trieste.¹⁷ In the city's Stadium, named for Tito, was a banner with the words '*We have never denied the Macedonian People's right to unite. We will not deny our principles because of personal sympathies*', then, quoting Tito's speech of 11 October the previous year, '*We have brethren in Aegean Macedonia, to whose fate we are not indifferent. Our thoughts are with them, and we care about them*'.¹⁸ This was the cue for fiery oratory in favour of the union of the 'Macedonian People'. The key speech was Frol's. To the plaudits of the assembled crowd, he gave his pledge that Yugoslavia would strive to this end.¹⁹ PRM's president, Količevski, invoked the example of the unification of Italy in the 19th century. He referred to the People's Republic of Makedonija as '*our own Piedmont, for the liberation and union of all Macedonia*'. He expressed his belief that the struggle for 'Aegean Macedonia' would wipe out the 'monarchist-fascist' [Greek] regime and would give the people back their freedom. Similar in tone was

13. IAYE 1946, File 67/2, Dalietos' telegram in code to Greek Foreign Ministry, Belgrade, 16 April 1946, Call No. 296.

14. IAYE 1946, File 67/2, Dalietos' report to Greek Foreign Ministry, Belgrade, 25 April 1946, Call No. 650. The Greek Ambassador got his information from the issue of *Borba* for 17 April 1946.

15. Halkias Archive.

16. IAYE 1946, File 67/2, Dalietos' report to Greek Foreign Ministry, Belgrade, 2 July 1946, Call No. 1206.

17. PRO/FO 371/58615, Clutton to Bevin, Belgrade, 22 August 1946, Call No. 310.

18. Halkias Archive.

19. Halkias Archive.

Vlahov's speech. He underlined the need for unremitting struggle so that the other two parts of Macedonia, the Greek and the Bulgarian, be joined to PRM. As representative of the refugees from Greek Macedonia, Mihail Keramičiev spoke of his fellow-combatants' distress. 'We Macedonians of the Aegean' (he said) 'are more uncertain than ever today which road to go if we are to gain our freedom and enter the People's Republic of Makedonija'. The Congress then resolved to send a memorandum to the Paris Peace Conference including the words: '*...in another Part of the country, Aegean Macedonia, there is raging terrorism... Our people ask that the principles of the Atlantic Charter be applied in Aegean Macedonia*'.²⁰ Simultaneously the following declaration was published in the newspapers: '*Women and men of Macedonia! Taking part in the 1st Congress of the Macedonian Popular Front were dear friends and delegates from Pirin [i.e. Bulgarian] and Aegean [i.e. Greek] Macedonia. This turned the Congress into a demonstration of the unshakeable determination of the Macedonian People, from all the Parts of Macedonia, to be completely free and at unity with our own PRM, within the Federal Yugoslav Republic. It has been a basic item on the agenda of the Popular Front, from the very first day of its existence, that the Macedonian People (in its entirety) must be united with its Republic*'.²¹

A further step forward in Skopje's irredentist actions was the publishing, in the 26 August 1946 issue of the official State news organ *Borba* [*The Struggle*], a map showing Yugoslavia's borders, as in force and as determined by 'ethnic group'. It is immediately obvious that the 'ethnic' boundaries take in very nearly the whole of Greek Macedonia, Thessaloniki included. Along with the map – which, it is important to note, was then published in many Yugoslav newspapers and journals – was an extensive article attacking '*the terrorism practised in Greece against democratic citizens,*²² *especially Slavophones*'. More than twenty thousand 'fellow-nationals' had, according to *Borba*, been obliged to leave Greece and flee to Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The reader needs to be aware here that the original of this map is to be found among Bulgarian nationalists of the period between the two World Wars, when Sofia had a virtual monopoly on Slav irredentism in the Macedonian Question. In 1933, for instance, the Macedonian Institute in Sofia attempted to reinforce Bulgarian expansionist plans by circulating a 'Geographical Map of Macedonia' (see *illustration below*). This same map, showing the 'Geographical and Ethnic Boundaries of Macedonia', was subsequently reproduced at Skopje, as an illustration for a *History of the Macedonian People* published in 1969 and reissued by the State Publishing

20. IAYE 1946, File 67/2, Telegram from Dalietos to Greek Foreign Ministry, Belgrade, 7 August 1946, Call No. 1461. See also Halkias Archive. See also Μόδης, *op.cit.*, pp. 40-41.

21. IAYE 1946, File 1/4, Letter from Dalietos to Greek Foreign Ministry, Belgrade, 10 August 1946, Call No. 1513. See also kai Halkias Archive, IAYE 1946, File 1/10, Letter from Lieut.Col. of Artillery K. Iatros to Greek Foreign Ministry, BΣΤ 902, 23 September 1946, Call No. Classified ΓΕΣ/3392203/A2/II. See also FO 371/58615, Clutton to Bevin, Belgrade, 22 August 1946, Call No. 310.

22. [This carefully-chosen expression would also have been capable of the meanings 'republican citizens' and 'citizens of the Republic' (i.e. PRM). *Translator's Note*].



▲ Map published in *Borba*, the Yugoslav Communist Party's official newspaper, on 26 August 1946.



▲ Map of Greater Macedonia, published in 1933 by the Macedonian Institute in Sofia.

House *Нова Македонија* in 1992. It was published in tandem with a book entitled *Macedonia: a Natural and Economic Unity* (Sofia 1945), reissued by FYROM's Institute of National History (Skopje 1978).

From the beginning of September 1946, the war of words between diplomats in Athens and Belgrade heats up. The opening shot was fired in Skopje on 12 September 1946, at the ceremony for the transfer of Goče Delčev's remains. Vlahov delivered an inflammatory oration in which he denounced the policy of the 'Greek fascists'. It was aimed (he said) at annihilating the 'Macedonian People' and at driving them out. Greece had 'no ethnic, political, or economic rights' over 'Aegean Macedonia'.²³

²³ Halkias Archive.



▲ Covers (in photocopy) of the book *Macedonia as a natural and economic unit* (Sofia 1945, in Bulgarian, republished Skopje 1978, in Slavmacedonian).

He virtually repeated these assertions a few days later at Monastir, when addressing a large gathering of some ten thousand people. 'Greece has no right to Aegean Macedonia' he said 'which has always been made up of Slavs'. He went on: 'The Macedonian People has, according to the

Atlantic Charter, every right to unite. A United Macedonia exhibits [sic] full and perfect ethnic, racial and economic unity. Each part of it seeks nothing other than union within the context and borders of Yugoslavia'.²⁴

At the end of September, Andrejev returned to the theme of acts of terrorism against the Slavophone population. He declared his firm intention of fighting to save them from imminent extinction.²⁵ At the Paris Peace Conference, the Yugoslav delegate to the Political & Territorial Committee on Bulgaria, Moša Pijade, declared in committee session that 'Aegean Macedonia' was going through 'the most tragic era of its history due to brutal violence',²⁶ and asked the Great Powers to intervene immediately 'to put a stop to this regime' so that

the 'oppressed Macedonian people could be freed from the Greek yoke and form a state within the Yugoslav Federation'.

Throughout the 1940s, the verbal *pronunciamenti* about the oneness of the Macedonian area and about *irredenta* 'Aegean Macedonia' were translated into action. It is now accepted that Yugoslavia was actively involved in the Greek Civil War, and that it openly incited, not so much the resistance fighters of Markos' Democratic Army, as those Slavophone organizations vowed to the secession of Greek Macedonia. One such was the secessionist movement led by Ilias Dimakis known as 'Goče'. In November 1944 he made Monastir his headquarters and worked hard at reorganizing his band, recruiting widely from refugees in Greece. Before very long he had a body of about a thousand men, which he named the 'First Aegean Strike Brigade'. Dimakis himself became the Brigade's



24. *Nova Makedonija*, 22 September 1946.

25. Halkias Archive.

26. IAYE 1946, File 43/4, Session Minutes of the Political & Territorial Committee on Bulgaria, 6 September 1946, IAYE 1946, File 1/4, Telegram from Dragoumis to Greek Foreign Ministry, Paris, 6 September 1946, Call No. 1426. See also *Καθημερινή*, 7 September 1946, *το Βήμα*, 7 September 1946, *το Φως*, 7 September 1946.

commander. As his second-in-command he chose Naum Pejov, a veteran of the SNOF [Slavomacedonian People's Liberation Front] and a native of the village of Gavros, near Kastoria: Pejov had fled to the PRM in June 1944. Dimakis' Political Commissar was Mihail Keramičiev, from the same village as Pejov, with Vangel Ajanovski-Oche from the Edessa region as Keramičiev's deputy.²⁷

There is also today evidence for the view that NOF [People's Liberation Front]²⁸ was organized at the instance of PRM, the Communist Party of Makedonija, and its overt aim was the union of Greek Macedonia with the Yugoslav Federation. Very revealing indeed is the content of a conversation



▲ The 'First Aegean Strike Brigade' marching through Monastir.

between Količevski and NOF leaders in Skopje, at the very end of the year 1946. Količevski gives them orders to go down into Greece and fight alongside the Greek Communists. *'You will now go down there... The KKE [Communist Party of Greece] will direct your struggle... The [party] line of the KKE has*

27. A few days later, the Aridaia & Edessa Battalion went the same road, under the leadership of another SNOF veteran, the schoolmaster Pavle Rakovski. See the article by Sp. Sfetas, «Αυτονομιστικές κινήσεις των Σλαβοφώνων κατά το 1944, η στάση του ΚΚΕ και η διαφύλαξη των ελληνογιουγκοσλαβικών συνόρων» [Slavophones' separatist moves in 1944, the Greek Communist Party's position, and the maintenance of the Greek and Yugoslav borders], pp. 105-124 (in Greek) in: *Πρακτικά του Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου Μακεδονία και Θράκη, 1941-1944. Κατοχή – Αντίσταση – Απελευθέρωση* [Proceedings of the International Conference 'Macedonia & Thrace': Occupation, Resistance, Liberation]. Thessaloniki, 1998.

28. NOF [Popular (or 'People's') Liberation Front] = НОФ [Народно Освободителниот Фронт]. Activist organization of Slavophones in Greece. Founded at the instance of the Yugoslav Communists. Active throughout the Greek Civil War, its aim being the secession of Greek Macedonia.

been put right... you can trust them... any problems you have, you can sort them out with the KKE leadership... fight whole-heartedly along with the Greek People... against chauvinism, separatism, and local trends'.²⁹

It is clear that these pro-Jugoslav elements in NOF had a single professed aim: the secession of Greek Macedonia and its union with the Yugoslav Federation. Supporting evidence of this is an article published by the organization in its periodical *Bilten* [The Bulletin] on 15 March 1946, in which NOF denies accusations of collaboration with the Bulgarians. 'We are not Ohranites ['Guards']' it reads, 'still less are we separatists. This is proved by the line we take. Our struggle is against separatism, for two reasons: it leads the Macedonian People to the precipice, to new slavery, and separatism is the line taken by the forces of international reaction, which want to break up the unity of the Yugoslav peoples'. This disclaimer was however accompanied by an affirmation of the policy of secession for Greek Macedonia and enosis with PRM: 'The Macedonian People have the right to unite and this right they have won with the gun. The Macedonian People of Aegean Macedonia have, by joining the ranks of ELAS [the National Popular Liberation Army] and by fighting Fascism, at the same time been fighting for national freedom... The Macedonian People of Aegean Macedonia has every right to ask to be united with its pillar and prop, progressive Vardar Macedonia... We wish to live with our free brethren of Vardar Macedonia, to be able to enjoy the fruits that the greater part of our people has won'.³⁰

The PRM's and Yugoslavia's irredentist claims continued unabated for the duration of the Greek Civil War. Elections for the Popular Front of Macedonia were held in Skopje, on 7 March 1948. As president of, respectively, the Presidium of the People's Parliament of Yugoslavia, and the Council of the Popular Front of Macedonia, Dimitar Vlahov condemned 'monarchist-fascist' Greece and referred to 'our Macedonian brethren in Aegean Macedonia, alongside the Democratic Army, fighting for its overthrow'.³¹ In a speech to the 2nd Congress of the Macedonian Popular Front, Količevski criticized Bulgaria's 'Patriotic Front' for ideas of aggrandisement, and in the same breath proclaimed the right of the 'Macedonian' people to unite within the Yugoslav Federation.³² Commenting on his statements, and on the dissonance between Belgrade and Sofia, the Greek daily newspaper *Kathimerini* observed that Serbia and Bulgaria were bickering not just amongst themselves, but like the proverbial 'two cocks fighting over someone else's barn' – the 'barn' being, Greek Macedonia.³³ Vlahov then went on to make new speeches in which he insisted that Greece had no

29. Tashko Mamurovski, *Паскал Митревски и неговото време (1912-1978)* [Paskal Mitrevski (i.e. Paskhalis Mitropoulos) and his times (1912-1978)], Skopje, 1992, pp. 73-74 (in Slavmacedonian). For NOF actions, the author cites a note from Fotev: this is now in his family archives.

30. Modis, *op.cit.*, pp. 12-13.

31. IAYE 1948, File 52, Sub-File 3, Report by P. Gerolymatos, 1st Secretary, directing the Greek Consulate at Skopje, to Greek Foreign Ministry, Skopje, 8 March 1948.

32. *Καθημερινή*, 15 June 1948.

33. *Καθημερινή*, 16 June 1948.



▲ Front page of Билтен [Bilten], issued by NOF during the Civil War.

sovereign rights over 'Aegean Macedonia', which, he said belonged from the ethnological point of view to the Slavomacedonians.³⁴

The year 1949 came in, and the drama of events in Greece reached its high point. Since the autumn of 1948 it had gradually emerged that relations between the KKE, the Greek Communist Party, and its Yugoslav counterpart were becoming increasingly strained. This very soon became clear for all to see; and it was the direct consequence of the rupture between Stalin and Tito, and Tito's expulsion from the Cominform in the summer of '48. At the very beginning of 1949, a close associate (Petros Roussos) of the senior Greek communist Nikos Zahariadis was summing up the work done outside Greece by the Party in 1948. He referred to 'Tito's treachery', and called it 'a stab in the back' for Greeks.³⁵ There was a double sequel: firstly, a split within the ranks of the NOF,³⁶ with a cleavage between pro-Yugoslavs and others who remained loyal to the Greek Communist Party, and secondly, a resolution by the Party at its 5th Plenary Session (30-31 January 1949), adding fuel to the flames. The Party's Secretary-General, Zahariadis, gave his audience a taste

34. Αλήθεια, 15 June 1948.

35. Anna Matthaiou & Popi Polemi. «'Οι διεθνείς σχέσεις της Δημοκρατικής Ελλάδας μέσα στο 1948': μία έκθεση του Πέτρου Ρούσου» [Petros Roussos' report, 'The foreign relations of the Republic of Greece in 1948'], Αρχαιοτάξιο, 2 (June 2000, in Greek), 8.

36. On the founding and activities of NOF the classic work on the Slavomacedonian side is still the study by Risto Kirjazovski [Ристо Кирјазовски], Народно Ослободителниот Фронт и Другите Организации на Македонците од Егејска Македонија (1945-1949)» [The People's Liberation Front and other organizations of Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia (1945-1949)], Skopje, 1985, in Slavomacedonian.

of what was to come in his opening remarks. *'In our People's new rising'*, he said, *'the Macedonian people have given their all. With their blood they have won the right to free and independent life and development. There can be no doubt that as a result of the victory of the popular revolution in Greece the Macedonian people will win the right to free and independent life and development'*. This was a frank confession of a change of direction on the minorities' issue, and it was certainly due to the tight corner in which the KKE found itself at the start of 1949. Therefore, despite the objections of many leading Party members, the 5th Plenary resolved to finally recognize the right of the 'Macedonian People' to national reconstruction and self-determination:

'...In northern Greece the Macedonian People have given their all for the struggle and are fighting on with admirable and total heroism and self-sacrifice. It cannot be doubted that as a result of victory by the DSE [Democratic Army of Greece] and the People's Revolution, the Macedonian People will have full national restitution, as they themselves want it, winning it tomorrow by giving their life-blood today. Macedonian Communists will always be at the head of their people's struggle. At the same time Macedonian Communists must beware of the divisive and disruptive activities fostered by alien elements in order to disrupt the unity between the Macedonian and the Greek People, a disruption that can only assist their common enemy, monarchism and fascism, and American and English imperialism. At the same time, the KKE must root out all obstacles and must strike at all chauvinist demonstrations of Greek expansionism, that are causing resentment and discomfort among the Macedonian People, thus helping the disrupters with their treacherous activity and stiffening the forces of resistance. The Slavomacedonian and the Greek People can only win if united. If divided, all they can do is lose. So the two peoples' unity in the struggle must be jealously guarded, as the apple of their eye, and strengthened little by little, day by day'.

The resolutions of the 5th Plenary Session were followed by a whole series of Party initiatives in pursuit of the new policy. The 2nd Plenary Session of the Central Committee of NOF was held on 3 February 1949. In his speech, Zahariadis set out what the Slavophones were being offered in exchange: essentially a reshuffle of the Republic's Provisional Government to promote a Slavophone to a ministerial post; NOF representation on the DSE's General Staff; the renaming of the DSE's 11th Division as the 'Macedonian Division'; and the founding of a 'Macedonian' Communist organization. In the hope particularly of pushing the group round the pro-Tito Keramičiev further to the sidelines, Zahariadis promoted to the NOF Secretariat two of his old buddies among the Slavomacedonian activists, Paskal Mitrevski and Pavel Rakovski. The KKE leadership was indisputably breaking new ground with these decisions, as was noted by the bourgeois Press, which spoke of the Party's *'irrevocable split...from the body of the Nation'*.³⁷

37. *Ελευθερία*, 4 March 1949.

It was not many weeks later, on 25-26 March 1949, that the 2nd Congress of the NOF was held, at Psarades on the Prespa Lakes district of Florina. To an audience of seven hundred delegates, Zahariadis acknowledged the part played by the 'Macedonian' people, and then harped on the need for unity with the Greek People if victory was to be achieved. At the end of its deliberations, the Congress condemned Keramičiev's pro-Yugoslav group, and declared the 'Macedonian' people's right to self-determination. *'In the present critical moments of the 2nd NOF Congress' an the Declaration, 'the enemies of our people are trying on all sides to disrupt the unity between the Macedonian People and the militant unity between the Macedonian People and the Greek People, a unity essential for the victory of both Peoples. Enemies of our People, of every sort, are exploiting military difficulties and the other difficulties stemming from them, and are exploiting the situation in Yugoslavia, uttering various different slogans that make headway with certain craven and drooping elements, inciting them to break ranks. We, the seven hundred delegates to the 2nd Congress of the People's Liberation Front, do brand these conspirators who are sowing disruption and desertion in our lines, treading on the blood of our thousands of heroes, as common traitors and miserable deserters from our People's struggle. All who have been led astray by the preaching of the enemy and the disrupters' subversive manoeuvres, and who have taken the easy road of flight and desertion, have done a hellish deed of counter-popular treachery that will help none but the enemy, the monarchist-fascists, and the imperialist camp'.³⁸*

On the very next day, 27 March, Zahariadis' pledge to the 2nd NOF Congress was put into effect, with the founding of KOEM [the Communist Organization of Aegean Macedonia]. A week later, on 3 April, Mitrevski became Minister of Supplies in the Provisional Government, Vangel Kojchev became a member of the DSE's Supreme War Council and Kochev became president of Directorate of National Minorities.

Throughout the spring of 1949 there were various different contacts, of a desperate kind, between the KKE and NOF, and Slavomacedonians who had taken refuge in Skopje. The purpose was to persuade these latter to change their minds and join the DSE, even were it only at the eleventh hour.³⁹ In May

38. For the resolutions taken at the 5th KKE Congress and the actions of NOF, the standard works are still Evangelos Kofos' book *The Impact of the Macedonian Question on Civil Conflict in Greece (1943-1949)*, (Athens, 1989, in English), and Spyridon Sfetas' article «Ανεπιθύμητοι σύμμαχοι και ανεξέλεγκτοι αντίπαλοι: Οι σχέσεις ΚΚΕ και ΝΟΦ στη διάρκεια του εμφυλίου (1946-1949)» [Undesirable allies and uncontrollable opponents: the relations between the KKE and the NOF during the Civil War (1946-1949)], in: Spyridon Sfetas [ed], *Όψεις του Μακεδονικού Ζητήματος στον 20ό αιώνα [Aspects of the Macedonian Question in the 20th century]* (Thessaloniki, 2001, in Greek), 157-203. See also Spyridon Sfetas. *Η διαμόρφωση της σλαβομακεδονικής ταυτότητας. Μια επώδυνη διαδικασία [The forming of the Slavomacedonian identity]*, Thessaloniki, 2003 (in Greek), pp. 257-268.

39. An exhaustive account of the negotiations between the Greek and Yugoslav Communists and the part played by the Slavomacedonians is to be found in a study by Risto Kirjazovski [Ристо Кирязовски], *Македонците и односите на КПЈ и КПГ 1945-1949 [The Macedonians and relations between the Yugoslav and Greek and Communist Parties, 1945-1949]*, Skopje, 1995, in Slavmacedonian.



▲ The newspaper *Μακεδονικός Φρουρός* [Makedonikos Frouros], 24 July 1949.

1949 the Keramičiev-Dimakis group sent the KKE a letter that put an end to all attempts to play the go-between.⁴⁰ It made a blanket criticism of KKE policy on the Macedonian Question as 'in error' and 'biased' against the 'Macedonian' People. Per contra, the letter lauded the Communist Parties of Yugoslavia and Makedonija, and Tito himself, to the skies for their policy. The Slavomacedonian 'guerrillas' naturally included among the conditions of their assistance to the KKE that they should receive 'an apology in writing' for the 'injustices' done to NOF; that independent 'Macedonian' units should be created, with a 'Macedonian' cadre at the head of each; that anti-Tito propaganda should be discontinued; and that free communication between Greek and Yugoslav Macedonia should be restored. These were demands to which the KKE obviously had no choice but to assent.⁴¹

On 28 July 1949, a month or so before the end of the Greek Civil War, an end which was already in sight, Tito addressed a convention of pro-Yugoslav NOF cadres in Skopje.⁴² The majority of them were refugees from Greece.⁴³ Tito launched a fierce attack on the KKE. He accused it of never having been remotely interested in the rights of Slavomacedonians in Greece.⁴⁴ He

40. There is a blow-by-blow account in the Memoirs of two leading Slavomacedonian activists, Naum Peyov, *Μακεдонците и граѓанската војна во Грција* [The Macedonians and the Civil war in Greece], Skopje, 1968, in Slavmacedonian. Vangel Ajanovski-Oche, *Ερεјски Бури* [Storms in the Aegean], Skopje, 1975, in Slavmacedonian.

41. The complete correspondence, and the contacts between pro-Yugoslav elements and loyal KKE cadres of the NOF, are to be found in: *Архив на Македонија, Ερεјска Македонија во НОБ 1949*, Vol. 6, Skopje, 1983, in Slavmacedonian.

42. IAYE 1949, File 34, Sub-File 2, Telegram from Baizos to Greek Foreign Ministry, Skopje, 28 July 1949, Call No. 571.

43. Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia*, Thessaloniki, 1964, p. 185, *Ελευθερία*, 30 July 1949.

44. Kofos, *op.cit.*, p. 185.



▲ The newspaper *Μακεδονικός Φρουρός* [Makedonikos Frouros], 15 May 1949 and 5 June 1949.



▲ 'The NOF and the Cominform greatly wanted to detach Greek Macedonia. 'Over my dead body!', says the Evzone. Nobody knew this better than Tito'.
From the newspaper *Μακεδονία* [Makedonia], 24 April 1949.

called on refugees from Greece to work for their peaceful integration into Yugoslavia – which was interpreted in Greek circles as meaning that he had given up his territorial claims on Greek Macedonia. Tito also met deputations of refugees from Greece and wounded guerrillas, a meeting which was given an official atmosphere by the presence of numerous high-ranking members of the Federal and local Party officials. The refugees apparently thanked Tito for his help, while condemning the revanchist language of KKE broadcasts against Yugoslavia.⁴⁵ Tito allowed a day or two to pass, then on 2 August 1949, on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the proclamation of the PRM, and in front of a very large audience – of perhaps as many as 35,000 people, according to foreign diplomats⁴⁶ – he delivered his bombshell. He accused the KKE of not behaving properly towards the 'Macedonians of the Aegean'. It had not placed them in senior Party positions; and it had not permitted 'Macedonian schools' to function in free Greece. Immediately afterwards, Makedonija's president, Količevski, described his Republic as '*the Piedmont of a future United Macedonia*'.⁴⁷ The above phraseology was a mirror of the revaluation of Yugoslav policy towards Greece. While the goal remained the same, to wit the secession of Greek Macedonia and the shielding of the 'Macedonian minority' in Greece, the means were now different, since virtually all the Slavomacedonian activists had by now fled to the PRM.

Once the Greek Civil War came to its close, PRM propaganda on behalf of 'Macedonia *irredenta*' increased. Now it was spearheaded by Slavophone ex-guerrillas who had taken refuge en masse in Yugoslavia after the War ended. Their efforts were aided and abetted by various different academic bodies in the PRM, giving them the necessary touch of authority and impetus to keep going. At the start of 1950, for instance, with the encouragement and economic assistance of the local Party leadership, the 'Union of Refugees from Aegean Macedonia' [UR] was set up in Skopje. Its aim was to pull into its ranks all the refugees from Greece who had made their way to the PRM. Membership of UR was open to any refugee living in Yugoslavia. Run by a General Council, it had branches, each with its own local council, in various parts of the country. The Union's interest was by no means confined exclusively to refugees in PRM, however; it extended to the Slavophone residue in Greece. In his summary to the general assembly one year after the inception, the Union's Secretary General stated that UR had a duty to keep a close eye on developments in Greek Macedonia, and to denounce the 'monarchist-fascist' Greek government's policy of discrimination against Slav-speakers.⁴⁸

45. IAYE 1949, File 34, Sub-File 2, Report from Baizos to Greek Foreign Ministry, Skopje, 7 August 1949, Call No. 602/Δ/1.

46. IAYE 1949, File 34, Sub-File 2, Report from Baizos to Greek Foreign Ministry, Skopje, 7 August 1949, Call No. 589/Δ/1.

47. Elizabeth Barker, *Macedonia: its place in Balkan Power Politics* (1950), pp. 209-210.

48. Архив на Македонија, фонд 996: «Организациони Извештај» [Organizational Report].

In June 1951, it was put on record in a resolution of UR's Assembly that it was the Union's duty not to be indifferent to the terrible sufferings of their People in Greece.⁴⁹ A codicil to the same resolution read: *'We must regularly keep the [Jugoslav] Government informed of the Athens Government's policy of genocide, and encourage it to take initiatives in international forums'*.

These observations placed the irredentist issue on the agenda of the SRM's – and hence Yugoslavia's - relations with neighbouring countries from the very first. The same purpose was also served by the use of the term 'Aegeans' [Егејците] to describe refugees from Greece, in place of the non-specific 'Macedonians'. It was clear, in other words, that the use of the term in question promoted the concept of the unity of the Macedonian People, while also pointing to the existence of 'enslaved, unredeemed brethren' and keeping alive the prospect of their future



▲ The newspaper Voice of the Aegeans [Глас на Егејците].

union under the leadership of the Yugoslav Communists. The same September, UR issued its own monthly newspaper, *Voice of the Aegeans* [Глас на Егејците].

This newspaper was one of several activities by which the UR hatched, and then gradually systematized and codified an irredentist campaign to the detriment of Greece. Dozens of articles were published by *Voice of the Aegeans* before its demise in 1954, a sacrifice on the altar of the triple rapprochement between Greece, Yugoslavia, and Turkey. All attempted to construct and bring to the fore a history of 'Aegean Macedonia', linking it with the broader historical superstructure of the SRM. The story of the closure of this activist organ is some indication of how organically it was connected with the official local political establishment. The stake of PRM's government in UR is also attested by the fact that in the summer of 1951 Dimči Mire, president of the local parliament, was a member not only of UR's Council General but also of the committee responsible for the newspaper. The reason why UR's activities were being encouraged by the Federal Government was, according to an evaluation by the British Embassy at Athens, that Belgrade wanted *'to keep Macedonian consciousness alive, since it might prove useful in the future'*. This might, the evaluation added,

49. Глас на Егејците, No. 11, 17 June 1951.

be a way of discouraging refugees who were not eager to stay in Yugoslavia and wanted to return to Greece.⁵⁰

From the very first moment, the UR's Slavomacedonian activists regarded it as of the greatest urgency to write their own history, which (they insisted) had been deliberately passed over in silence by Balkan historians; and they also laid great weight on the political education of the young. Construction of a Slavomacedonian myth: this was their ultimate goal. The Slav Macedonian way of thinking had by now cottoned on to the unique advantage, for this purpose, of actually living in PRM, friendly mother and homeland. What was needed for success was to mobilize all the available forces of the political *nomenklatura* among the Slavomacedonian political refugees. Their writing of a 'constructed' history proceeded along three main lines. First they recorded the military events of the past ten years, the German Occupation, and the Greek Civil War, and set them in a connected chain of Slavomacedonian history. Second, they linked this whole period with the remoter past, and above all with the Ilinden Uprising of 1903. Third, they singled out Slavomacedonian heroes from the more recent historical past and set them among the pantheon of other Slavomacedonian heroes of the Federal Republic.

The method of achieving the first of these aims preoccupied the editorial staff of *Voice of the Aegeans* throughout the paper's existence. At the UR's annual General Assembly in June 1951, there was lengthy discussion among the organization's leading cadres about what goals were advisable. Naum Pejov made a keynote speech in which he said:

'Out of our young people must be created a vigorous national intelligentsia that will defend the interests of our People. We have never yet had the chance to develop an intelligentsia, because it has been doing its studies in neighbouring countries and has been shaped in a mould hostile to our national liberation struggle... We do not have any official confirmation for the lives laid down and the material destruction suffered by our People, and this is one part of our national history that our young ones must be indoctrinated with. It is one way of showing our friends and our enemies that we mean to live free. So memoirs must be compiled, the lives laid down must be recorded, and brochures and books must be written with professional skill'.⁵¹

Another delegate, Basil (not to be confused with Naum) Pejov, observed that the Union of Macedonian Writers ought to take steps to publish material about the life and struggles of the 'Macedonian People' of 'Aegean Macedonia'. The need to raise the refugees' cultural and academic level

50. FO 371/95163: Confidential Report from the British Embassy at Athens to the British Embassy at Belgrade, Athens, 7 August 1951, Call No. Emb.1041/43/51.

51. Глас на Егејците, No. 11, 17 June 1951.

was pointed out by Risto Andonovski and the UMW's secretary Micho Terpovski singled out children's education as the central focus of this need.

At the start of 1952, *Voice of the Aegeans* acted on Naum Pejov's prompt, putting out a request to any 'Aegeans' with photographs of different parts of Makedonija, and in particular with photographs of dead bodies, to send them to the editorial team for publication in a planned album.⁵² The Union's Council General was simultaneously collecting details about lives lost. The intention was to put out a kind of White Book about Aegean Macedonia. A collateral manoeuvre was a move to erect a War Memorial to Slavomacedonian 'Aegean' heroes killed in the 1940s.⁵³ In July 1953 the editorial board was compelled to admit, to its evident discomfiture, that the results had not come up to its expectations, and that the only publication so far had been a brochure on Greek Macedonia.⁵⁴

It was also at this time that leading Slavomacedonian cadres shouldered the task of recording the bloody details of recent history, to be made public in the columns of the refugee newspaper. There were a great many contributors, but the main names were those of (Naum) Pejov, Andonovski, Andreas Tsipas, and Keramičiev. As can be seen from the articles, Pejov, the ex-separatist, had not only contrived to heal the scars of the wound to his authority in 1944, but had outgunned, in the ideological sense, all others who thought like him. His various speeches at different refugee assemblies, his stream of articles on events during the Occupation and the Civil War: these were patiently hosted in *Voices of the Aegean*, even when, as often happened, they made up one half of its reading matter. It was on the Occupation and the Civil War that Pejov concentrated, for the most part or on what the SNOF⁵⁵ and the NOF were up to, their relations with the Greek Communist Party, and the doldrums of the 'Slavomacedonian' minority that obstinately stayed in Greece.⁵⁶ Tsipas⁵⁷ and Keramičiev⁵⁸ covered much the same ground as Pejov. Andonovski⁵⁹

52. Глас на Егејците, No. 22, May 1952.

53. Глас на Егејците, No. 11, 17 June 1951.

54. Глас на Егејците, No. 36, July 1953.

55. SNOF [Slavomacedonian People's Liberation Front] = ЧОФ [Славомакедонско Народно Ослободителниот Фронт]. Activist organization of Slavomacedonians in Greece. Active throughout the Occupation of Greece, its aim being the secession of Greek Macedonia.

56. See, for a sample, five of Pejov's articles in Глас на Егејците (in Slavmacedonian): 'Put a stop to the violent terrorizing of our brethren in Aegean Macedonia', No. 3, Nov. 1950, 'SNOF's work in the ranks of ELAS [the Greek National Liberation Army] in Aegean Macedonia', No. 4, Dec. 1950, 'The situation of our People in Aegean Macedonia', No. 11, 17 June 1951, 'A contribution to the truth – stemming from the 1st Congress of the NOF in Aegean Macedonia', No. 18, Jan. 1952, 'Hundreds of thousands of Macedonians demand their minority rights', No. 40, Nov. 1953.

57. Tsipas's articles in Глас на Егејците (in Slavmacedonian): 'On my own', No. 19, March 1952, 'The KKE and the Macedonian ethnic question', No. 29, Dec. 1952, No. 30, Jan. 1953, No. 31, Feb. 1953.

58. See Keramičiev's articles in Глас на Егејците (in Slavmacedonian): 'We are fighting for the minority rights of our People' No. 4, Dec. 1950. See also his first editorial leader for August 1951; he remained editor until June 1953.

59. See Risto Andonovski's articles in Глас на Егејците (in Slavmacedonian): 'Vodena and its inhabitants', No. 9, May 1951, 'Irina Gionova-Mrka', No. 12, July 1951, 'In the hills of Aegean Macedonia', No. 18, Jan. 1952, No. 19, Feb. 1952, No. 22, May 1952, 'Is there or is there not a Macedonian Question for Greece in Aegean Macedonia?', No. 39, Oct. 1953, No. 40, Nov. 1953, No. 42, Jan. 1954, No. 43, Feb. 1954, No. 44, March 1954, 'Well-loved folksongs of Aegean Macedonia', No. 45, Apr. 1954.



◀ The co-authored book *Aegean Macedonia in our national history*.

and Šimovski⁶⁰ were chiefly interested in folklore and are valuable in that they preserve much information about life in Greek Macedonia in the years between the two World Wars.

Articles from the newspaper were cannibalized for a book entitled *Erejska Makedonija* [Aegean Macedonia], published by the Union of Refugees Press in 1951, under Andonovski's name. Also in 1951, Keramičiev contributed an article to the collective work *Erejska Makedonija vo našata nacionalna istorija* [Aegean Macedonia in our national history]. The newspaper's directorate undertook the placing of his book and its distribution to refugee organizations. In August 1952, the UR's Secretariat decided to set up an ad hoc committee to opine on whether or not it was worth publishing two new books about the Occupation and the Greek Civil War, one by Andonovski and one by Pejov.

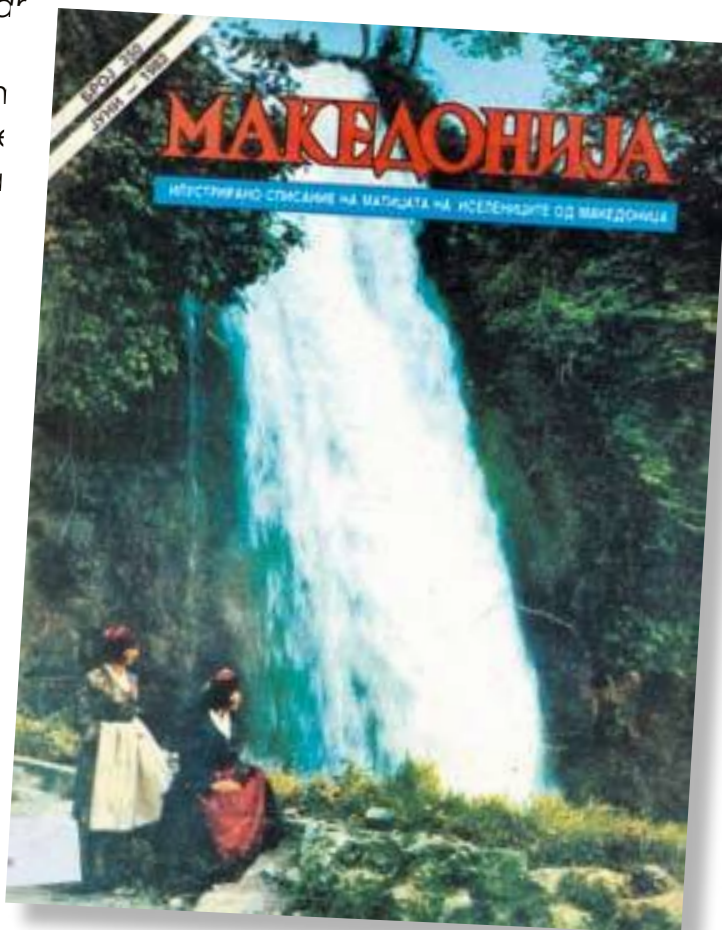
It was as the 'Aegeans' were compiling their own history that the first young students entered the University of Skopje, newly founded in 1949. In January 1952, the newspaper was able to report, with evident satisfaction,

60. See Todor Šimovski's articles in *Глас на Ерејците* (in Slavmacedonian): 'On the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the death of Risto Batančiev, teacher and revolutionary', No. 36, July 1953, 'In our birthplace of Dibeni', No. 39, Oct. 1953, No. 40, Nov. 1953, 'Goče Delčev at Goumenissa', No. 46, May 1954.

that there were now a total of five students in the University's Faculty of Philosophy. These were Gjorgji Sevrier, Dimitar Velikov, Krste Bitovski, Spiro Stojanski, and Kuzma Gjorgjevski. In 1952, Todor Šimovski became the first 'Aegean' from the Faculty to take his degree, and at the start of the year the student roll included 47 'Aegeans', with scholarships from PRM each worth 4200 dinars a month.

The basic thing to note is that production of an ideological armoury of texts about the Greek Civil War and the Ilinden Uprising lasted until 1954. These texts were mainly for internal consumption by 'Aegean' refugees. After 1954 there followed a period in which the older stock of historical commentaries was being legitimated and incorporated into PRM's collective national ideology. It was also the year 1954 which saw the definitive settlement, even if not quite the actual finish, of the issue about whether refugees should remain in the country. Not that the production of history books specially for 'Aegeans' came to a halt. Матица на Иселениците од Македонија, the 'Centre for Macedonians in Exile', founded in 1951, continued the work of the UR, particularly in the political domain. And if *Voice of the Aegeans* did fall silent in 1954, it was at once replaced by a monthly called *Makedonija* [Македонија], whose first editor was none other than Andonovski, and an annual called *The Exile's Calendar* [Иселенички Календар].

It was not only ex-guerrillas from Greece who were looking into the history of 'Aegean Macedonia' with interest. Before very long this subject was introduced as a separate category of reference and research, into the repertoire of the SRM's official organ for such studies, IEE, the Institute of National History. The IEE had been founded by SRM's government in 1948, with one clear aim – 'to write and publicize the official history of the Macedonian People', and to incorporate it into Yugoslav history as a whole.⁶¹ On 1 July 1956, delivering a speech for the IEE's first anniversary, in front of Party officials and academic VIPs, Šimovski –



▲ Cover of the magazine *Македонија*, with the waterfalls at Edessa.

61. Vlado Ivanovski [Владо Ивановски] (ed.), *30 години Институт за Национална Историја*, [30 Years of the Institute of National History], [n.pl.], 1978.

refugee from the Kilkis district who had been the first 'Aegean' to join the Institute, in 1952 – said that one of the IEE's basic obligations ought to be to collect historical material, not just about the distant past, but about the recent struggle of the 'Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia'. Here (he said) events of great importance had taken place – struggles worthy of inclusion in the official history, lest they be forgotten.⁶² Šimovski's prompting seems to have had its effect, for over the coming years a series of 'Aegean' historians were to join the Institute, their one and only task being to compile a history of 'Aegean Macedonia'. In 1964, a post was found for Risto Poplazarov, from Kalohori near Kastoria, who four years earlier had graduated from the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Prague in Czechoslovakia. In 1967, it was the turn of Krste Bitoshki, from the village of Gavros, also near Kastoria, who had completed his studies in the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Skopje in 1956. They were joined in 1970 by Risto Iliovski, a child of the *Paidomazoma*,⁶³ who had studied in Budapest; in 1972 by Stojan Kiselinovski, another child of the *Paidomazoma*, who had studied in Romania; in 1974 by a Democratic Army veteran, Risto Kirjazovski; in 1976 by Vasil Gotevski from Idroussa, a history graduate of the University of Warsaw; and in 1977 by Eleftheria Bambakovska, from Kardia near Kozani, a history graduate of the University of Skopje.⁶⁴ Significantly, by the end of the 1980s a quarter of all the Institute's research fellows were of Greek extraction; and it was they who monopolized the discussion of research on subjects of Greek interest. The Balkanology Section was well known to be packed with 'Aegean' staff. It was headed by Rastislav Terzjovski from Perlepe [Prilep], and all its researchers without exception were of 'Aegean Macedonian' origin: Šimovski, Kirjazovski, Kiselinovski, and Theodoros Papanagiotou.⁶⁵ In 1976 Šimovski was drafted to the editorial team of the Institute's review *Гласник* [*The Messenger*], to be followed in 1979 by Iliovski and in 1983 by Bitoshki. (It is a striking fact that even in today's FYROM, no historian hailing from any other region has written about historical developments in Greek Macedonia). Thus their texts are fatally loaded with sentimental effusion, hyperbole, and hostile innuendo towards Greece. It is further interesting to note how the 'Aegean lobby', as they call themselves, has imposed itself, with regard to Party legitimacy and political approach, even on history as written in the Yugoslav Federation.

The rise of the 'Aegeans' as academics in the 1960s and 70s went hand in glove with the war of words between the diplomats of Athens and Belgrade during these two decades. The battle over the Macedonian Question, a

62. «Годишно Собрание на Институтот за Национална Историја», ['The Annual Assembly of the Institute of National History], *Гласник*, 1/1 (1957), 339.

63. [*Paidomazoma*: the 'collecting up of minors'. A term current during Seljuk and Ottoman occupation of Greece to denote the occupying power's seizure and reculturing of (male) children, some destined for high military or civilian office. Now more usually applied, by transference, to Greek Communist guerrillas' abduction by of children from Greek territory to neighbouring Communist countries (contested by revisionist historians). Translator's Note].

64. Ivanovski, *op.cit.*, pp. 46, 93, 101, 104, 112-113, 118.

65. *ibid.*, p. 30.

**ΑΝΕΞΗΓΗΤΟΣ Η ΑΝΑΚΙΝΗΣΙΣ
ΥΠΟ ΤΟΥ ΒΕΛΙΓΡΑΔΙΟΥ
ΘΕΜΑΤΟΣ ΣΛΑΥΟΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΩΝ
ΔΕΝ ΥΦΙΣΤΑΤΑΙ ΔΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΈΛΛΑΔΑ
ΖΗΤΗΜΑ ΤΟΙΑΥΤΗΣ ΜΕΙΟΝΟΤΗΤΟΣ**

▲ The newspaper *Μακεδονία* [Makedonia], Thessaloniki, 30 August 1953.

battle as often as not fomented by the Yugoslavs, could now be based on a rich fund of reserves supplied by the 'Aegeans' – persevering though in the wrong, and now with the legal blessing of the State.⁶⁶ A three-volume work, *Историја на македонскиот народ* [The History of the Macedonian People], was published to great applause by the Institute of National History in 1969. It included extensive references to 'Aegean' Macedonia, the texts having been written by the troika Andonovski, Šimovski, and Bitoshki.

The same period saw the publication by the Institute of a whole series of books by other 'Aegeans'. The great majority of them were by veteran guerrillas who had, rather late in the day, discovered that writing history could be a road to rehabilitation.⁶⁷ 'Aegean' historians were also now coming into closer touch with the public in the rest of the Yugoslav Republics, as a result of the printing of their own works in Belgrade, their appearances in Yugoslav books of multiple authorship, and publication of their articles in Yugoslav journals.⁶⁸ 'Aegean' Slavomacedonian guerrillas could well afford

66. The passage of words between Konstantinos Karamanlis, then Greek Prime Minister, and Đuranović, Federal Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, at Split in March 1979, afford a typical instance. The discussions turned to the subject of cultural exchanges, whereupon Đuranović remarked: 'In the domain of bi-lateral cooperation there is the matter of the Macedonian ethnic minority'. Karamanlis immediately replied that that was 'a regrettable issue' in bilateral relations. He asked what the point was of the Macedonians digging up the Macedonian Question forty years on. Đuranović answer was: 'There are no differences between Belgrade and Skopje on matters of foreign policy'. The atmosphere was dangerously charged. Karamanlis refused to discuss the subject any further, and the two leaders turned their attention to other matters. It was however plain that this skirmish about the Macedonian Question had overshadowed the summit talks. See Konstantinos Svolopoulos (ed.), *Κωνσταντίνος Καραμανλής. Αρχείο. Γεγονότα και κείμενα* [The Karamanlis Archives], Vol. 11 *Η Ελλάδα στην Ευρώπη 1977-1980* [Greece in Europe 1977-1980]. *Περίοδος Β' 1η Ιανουαρίου 1979 - 15 Μαΐου 1980* [Period II: 1.1.1979-15.5.1980], Athens, 1997, in Greek, pp. 64-68.

67. Good examples are Naum Pejov's *Македонците и граѓанската војна во Грција*, [The Macedonians and the Civil War in Greece], Skopje, 1968, in Slavmacedonian; Ajanovski-Oche's *Ерејски бури*, [Storms in the Aegean], Skopje, 1975, in Slavmacedonian; and Šimovski's *Населените места во Ерејска Македонија*, [The inhabited regions of Aegean Macedonia], Vol. 1, Skopje, 1978, in Slavmacedonian.

68. Krste Vitoshki [Крсте Битоски], 'Отпорот на Македонците против асимилаторските стремежи на грчката вооружена пропаганда (1878-1908)', [The Resistance of the Macedonians to attempts by the armed Greek propaganda to assimilate them], *Југословенски историски часопис*, 4 (Belgrade, 1969, in Slavmacedonian), 125-128; Risto Poplazarov [Ристо Поплазаров], 'Некои моменти од борбата на Македонците против грчката и бугарската црковно-просветна доминација во втората половина на XIX век (до 1888)' [Some key moments in the Macedonians' struggle against Greek and Bulgarian religious and educational domination in the later 19th century, up to



◀ The three-volume *History of the Macedonian People*.

to speak with pride of their part in the Resistance, their work alongside Tito's *Partizani*, and the rectitude with which they toed the Yugoslav Party line. These were very considerable virtues when taken in relation to the building of the Yugoslav Federal State.

In the decades to come, the slogan of an *irredenta* 'Aegean Macedonia' would be PRM's flagship, used whenever the international situation warranted it, as a serviceable

bludgeon at official discussions between Greece and Yugoslavia. This was the era of 'the non-existent Macedonian Question', the long haul of the Cold War. The allies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization found it expedient to give preferential treatment to a Yugoslavia that did not 'toe the Soviet line'. At the same time they put pressure on the powers that be in Greece not to rock the boat but to keep their mouths shut, since that was what the interests of the Western world dictated. The then Prime Minister of Greece, Constantine Karamanlis, and his Foreign Minister, Averof, tasted the fruits of this *Realpolitik* early in the 1960s, when their Yugoslav counterparts precipitously withdrew the issue of 'unredeemed Macedonian regions' from the conference agenda.

In the summer of 1960 one Slavomacedonian newspaper after another published articles attacking an alleged Greek policy against Slavophones in Greek Macedonia. The lead was taken by the official Government press organ, *Нова Македонија* [*New Makedonija*]. The campaign was reinforced by speeches from Tito's Foreign Minister, Drago Kunč. Diplomatic reflexes were immediately triggered by these developments. On 2 June 1960,

1888], *Југословенски историски часопис*, 4 (Belgrade, 1969, in Slavmacedonian), 103-110; Idem, 'Македонска историографија за историјата на македонскиот народ во XIX и почетокот на XX век', [The writings of Macedonian historians on the history of the Macedonian people in the 19th and early 20th century]; *The Historiography of Yugoslavia 1965-1975* (Belgrade, 1975, in Slavmacedonian), 298-323; Idem, 'Македонски доброволци во Српско-турската војна во 1876 год.', *Југословенски историски часопис*, [Macedonian volunteers in the Serbo-Turkish War of 1876], 1-2 (Belgrade, 1976, in Slavmacedonian).



◀ The newspaper *Μακεδονία* [Macedonia], Thessaloniki, 20 June 1950.



◀ The newspaper *Μακεδονία* [Macedonia], Thessaloniki, 20 June 1950.



▶ The newspaper *Μακεδονία* [Macedonia], Thessaloniki, 9 September 1950.

Dimitrios Nikolareizis, the Greek Ambassador to Belgrade, had a meeting with the then Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Kosta Popović, their agenda being the recent speeches by Kunč, and the resuscitation of the Macedonian Question by Yugoslav circles more generally. The meeting was revealing as to the Yugoslavs' approach to the question and the arguments advanced by them. Popović told his Greek guest quite frankly that in Yugoslavia's view there did exist a 'Macedonian' minority in Greece. Taken aback, the Greek Ambassador replied that this was '*a serious thing to say*'. He went on: '*We have always been under the impression that it was only circles in Skopje that brought up any question of a Macedonian minority; and that the Government in Belgrade never encouraged them to bring such a question up*'. He assured Popović that his Government would react '*violently*' when it heard this piece of news; and that Premier Karamanlis would be enraged, especially since he was just about to pay an official visit to Belgrade.⁶⁹ Popović rejoined drily, no doubt hoping to play down the unfortunate impression he had made, that his government could hardly overlook the existence of a 'Macedonian' minority in Greece, since this would be a departure from their principles. At the same time, (he said), he quite understood the Greek position.

One month later, in July, the Foreign Ministers of the two countries, Averof and Popović, met at Tito's bower, the Brijuni Islands. At the top of their agenda was the Macedonian Question. Popović repeated the familiar position of Yugoslavia: it was impossible for Belgrade to ignore the existence of a 'kindred', 'Macedonian' minority in Greece, without saying a word, when Greece was involved in acts of *provokatsia* to this minority's detriment. This was a position rooted (he said) in firm Yugoslav convictions. The Federal Government could not exercise control of statements by local governments, or of '*what the papers said*'. He did however accept that this would not have occurred to the same degree by comparison with Greece. Averof, visibly annoyed by what his counterpart had just said, replied with emphasis that the minority question '*might well blow Greek-Yugoslav relations sky-high*'. He advised Popović to be more prudent. There were, after all, SRM documents which referred to Greek Macedonia as 'Aegean Macedonia'. '*What is Skopje implying here?*' (he enquired). '*That Greek Macedonia does not exist? Or that it ought not to exist? This would mean war*'. But despite this verbal sparring, the two Ministers' meeting appears to have ended in a gentleman's agreement to avoid any action that might poison bilateral relations.

At the beginning of October 1960, in a speech to the People's Parliament of Makedonija, with the Yugoslav Federal Vice-President Kardelj in attendance, Prime Minister Količevski insisted that the presence of a 'Macedonian' minority in Greece was an incontrovertible historical fact.

69. Kofos Archives. Talks between Nikolareizis and Popović, 2 June 1960.

No one (he said) could prevent his People taking an interest in their fate.⁷⁰

These irredentist speeches in SRM were not without their consequences. This time the fuse was an answer that the new Prime Minister, Aleksandar Grilčo, gave an American journalist at a reception for members of the Press, on 14 November 1961. Greece was (he said) taking '*certain disquieting measures*' to the detriment of the 'Macedonian' minority. Grilčo also told the journalist that Athens' ultimate policy aim was to efface the minority's ethnic consciousness.⁷¹ Finally, he repeated his country's fixed position that the only way bilateral relations between Makedonija and Greece could be improved was by Greece's recognizing minority rights. Two days later, the Yugoslav Ambassador at Athens was summoned by Averof for a friendly rap over the knuckles for Grilčo's indiscreet remarks. The ambassador made light of them, and, in the hope of showing that they were not espoused by Belgrade, he assured the Greek Foreign Minister that they had not been published in *Borba* [the official Party paper] or transmitted by *Tanjug* [the State News Agency].⁷²

Now that there was a bush war of speeches, Averof himself entered the fray, on 7 December 1961. In an address to the Greek Parliament, the Foreign Minister described the Grilčo speech as '*unacceptable*', and repeated the fixed Greek position, that no 'Macedonian' minority existed in the country. A week later, on 15 December, a spokesman for the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Kunč, made use of Averof's address for a whitewash of Makedonija's Prime Minister, repeating his country's firm position that there was indeed a 'Macedonian' minority in Greece and adding that nothing but giving this minority their 'rights' would normalize bilateral relations.

Generous measures were taken by the local SRM government at this time for the benefit of their refugees from Greece. A law was passed in 1961 recognizing service in the ranks of NOF or SNOF as a 'period of employment'. (This measure had been in force earlier, but only for service in the DSE: it had been discontinued in 1956 in deference to 'Greek-Yugoslav friendship'). Many refugees had also been given awards for services rendered to their country; and a fair number of others had got a pension. Three leading 'Aegean' cadres had been elected People's Deputies. Two of them went on to hold a ministerial post: Pejov, as Minister of Farming and Forests, and Mitrevski, as Deputy Minister of People's Legislation. Keramičiev became a Deputy and, like Ajanovski-Oche, a senior official in the Ministry of the Interior. Taško Hadžijanev became a senior official in the Ministry of Farming and Forests. Minas Fotev became a senior official in the local SRM Government Office.

And so things stood until the end of the 1980s and the start of the '90s, when

70. *Nova Makedonija*, 6 October 1960.

71. *Καθημερινή*, 15 November 1961.

72. PRO/FO 371/160434, Letter from the British Embassy in Athens to the Foreign Office, Athens, 17 November 1961, Call No. 1033/25/61.

the break-up of Yugoslavia resulted in the independence of its component Republics, including Makedonija.

The establishment of FYROM in September 1991, this did not put an end to claims about 'unredeemed', 'Aegean' Macedonia. Quite the contrary. It is now generally accepted that forces were unleashed, rather than held in check, by the new *données*. Gone were those formal inhibitions that Belgrade entertained from time to time. The fledgling country was flooded with maps showing a Greater Macedonia, unified as far as the foothills of mount Olympus. These maps were reprinted in school textbooks, sent as postcards, and were even used on stamps. Only then did the powers that be in Greece look the problem squarely in the face. Initially they had been stunned; then they were angry.

Today, twelve years after the signing of the Interim Accord, an agreement more honoured in the breach than in the observance, the irredentist output from FYROM, so far from withering away, is wider, and more intensive. As was said earlier, the relevant references may have been deleted from the Constitution, and the need for diplomatic equilibrium may have succeeded in papering over the cracks so far as the international arena goes. But these days FYROM's irredentist propaganda lurks in official government discourse and in a whole host of government decisions and acts, party political manifestoes, and pronouncements by State foundations. To take but one example, insistence on the use of the term 'Aegean Macedonia' is universal and permanent. That piece of irredentism occurs even on the official website of FYROM's Foreign Ministry, where the Minister is said, at the end of December 2006, to have had a meeting with a delegation from 'the Union of Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia'.

This particular organization, and others like it of refugees from Greece, receives annual funding from FYROM's treasury (as can easily be seen by reference to the official government bulletin). One effect of funding has been, almost inevitably, the return from the dead of the newspaper *Voices of the Aegean*, complete with a bevy of verbal aggression against Greece. Another generous beneficiary of the state coffers is a newspaper called *Ne Zaborav* [*I do not forget!*].

FYROM also funded the 3rd Rally of 'Child-Refugees from Aegean Macedonia' in Skopje in summer 2003. FYROM's Parliament is not far behind in irredentist measures: the parliamentary calendar of official holidays now includes an 'Aegean Brigade Day'. (This brigade was originally recruited from Slavophone activists hard at work, as we have seen, to achieve the secession of Greek Macedonia and its union with what was then the Yugoslav Federation). A 'unified unredeemed Macedonia' also receives much exposure on the official website of the Church in Skopje, Orthodox, but schismatic. Of the same tenor are long print run publications by official state bodies such as FYROM's Institute of National History or her Academy of Sciences, all intended to set in solid type the indissoluble links joining Macedonian lands together.

Министерство за Надворешни
на Република Македонија

СРЕДБА НА МИНИСТЕРОТ МИЛОШОСКИ СО ПРЕТСТАВНИЦИ ОД СОЈУЗОТ НА
ЗДРУЖЕНИЈА НА МАКЕДОНЦИТЕ ОД ЕГЕЈСКИОТ ДЕЛ НА МАКЕДОНИЈА
Скопје, 21.12.2006 година

Министерот за надворешни работи, м-р Антонио
Милошоски, денес на нивно барање, прими претставници од
Сојузот на здруженија на Македонците од Егејскиот дел на
Македонија.

Тие информираа за нивните досегашни активности и идни
планови, при што побараа конкретна помош и поддршка од
Министерството за надворешни работи.

Министерот Милошоски нагласи дека Владата на Република
Македонија со должно и целосно внимание ќе ги разгледа
проблемите на Сојузот. Притоа, согласно меѓународните
стандарди за заштита на човековите права и фундаментални
слободи, како и во согласност со Уставните обврски ќе се започне
за изнаоѓање соодветно решение за исполнување на нивните
барања.

Почетна страна
Министерство
Соопштение до СМ
Економска дипломатија
Консуларна информатика
Министрија - ЕУ
Министрија - НАТО
Политички документи
ДП-а на РМ
ДП-а во РМ
Публикациски центар
Публикации
Пребарување

Поздравни писмото
- Влада на Р. Македонија
- Собранија на Р. Македонија
- Министерство за надворешни работи на РМ
- Министерство за одбрана на РМ
- Министерство за економија на РМ
- Министерство за финансии на РМ
- Сектор за европски интеграции
- Еурупри
- Телефонски звањка на РМ
- Македонска информативна агенција
- Државен завод за статистика
- Европска унија
- НАТО (НАТО)
- НАТО пакт во Скопје
- Weblog Page Macedonia
Business directory

Соопштение
- Прес-к
- Бидејќи

- ВО ТИМ
КОНСУЛТАЦИИ
НАДВОРЕ
РЕПУБЛИКА
НА РЕПУБЛИКА
Скопје, 1
- ВО БЕЛ
НИВНИТЕ
СО СЛОБО
ДРАЖНОСТ
Скопје, 1
година
- ВО БРИ
НИВНИТЕ
СО ТЕНЕР
НА НАТО
ШЕФЕР
Скопје, 1
година
- НИВНИ
НАДВОРЕ
АНТОНИС
РАБОТНА
РЕПУБЛИКА
Скопје, 7
година
- ПОСЛА
ЗА НАДВО
АНТОНИС
ДИПЛОМА
Скопје, 6
година
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НАДВОРЕ
СИСТЕМ
КОРИСТИ
ПАРТИЗАН
РЕПУБЛИКА
АЛБАНИЈА
Скопје, 3
година
- АКТИВНО
НИВНИТЕ
МИЛОШОСКИ
ЕВРО-МЕД
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НАДВОРЕ
ЗЕЛЕНИТЕ
ОД РЕПУБЛИКА
Скопје, 2
година
- УЧЕСТВО
АНТОНИС
В-НАТА, Е
НЕДВИТЕ

<http://www.mfa.gov.mk/ministerstvo.asp?idMeni=2&idKategorija=4&idSodrzina=877> 27/12/2006

◀ The announcement, on the official website of FYROM's Foreign Ministry, of a meeting between Foreign Minister Milošoski and a delegation from the 'Union of Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia', at the end of December 2006.

It is also interesting to see how, from 1998 onwards, the durable concept of a Greater Macedonia, as a separate geographical entity, has reappeared on the scene. Until 1998 its historicity went back only as far as the nineteenth century, as is evident from one reprint after another of the official *Historical Map of Macedonia*. On this map, issued at Skopje in 1992, the only territory marked as 'Macedonia in Prehistoric Times' is that occupied today by FYROM. But in the 'revised editions' of the atlas, in 1998 and 2006, all of geographical Macedonia is now included. So too for the classical period. In the 1992 edition there is no clear boundary between classical Greece and Macedonia in classical times. But in



▲ Left: Front page of the magazine Voice of the Aegeans [Глас на Егејците].

► Right: Front page of the newspaper Незаборав [Nezaborav ('I do not forget!')].



the 1997 editions Greece and Macedonia are shown as two different regions.

The same goes for the way Macedonia is represented in the remaining historical periods. Whereas in the 1992 edition no 'ethnic and geographical boundaries of Macedonia' are shown for the Medieval period, in the 1997 edition Medieval Macedonia is a visible entity with geographical as well as ethnic borders.

Thus FYROM's irredentist ideology underwent a certain radicalization from 1998 onwards, in defiance of the provisions of the recently signed Interim Agreement. There is an ongoing attempt to construct a national myth and the means used is the aggressive appropriation of the region's history – up to and including designs on the ancient Macedonian Greek heritage and its legators in prehistory. The phrase that best describes this desperate





▲ Map of Macedonia in Prehistoric Times. *Historical Atlas* (Skopje 1998, 2006).



▲ The Greek colonies. Kosta Atsievski & team, *Историја за V одделение* [History Textbook, Grade V], Skopje 2005, p.37.

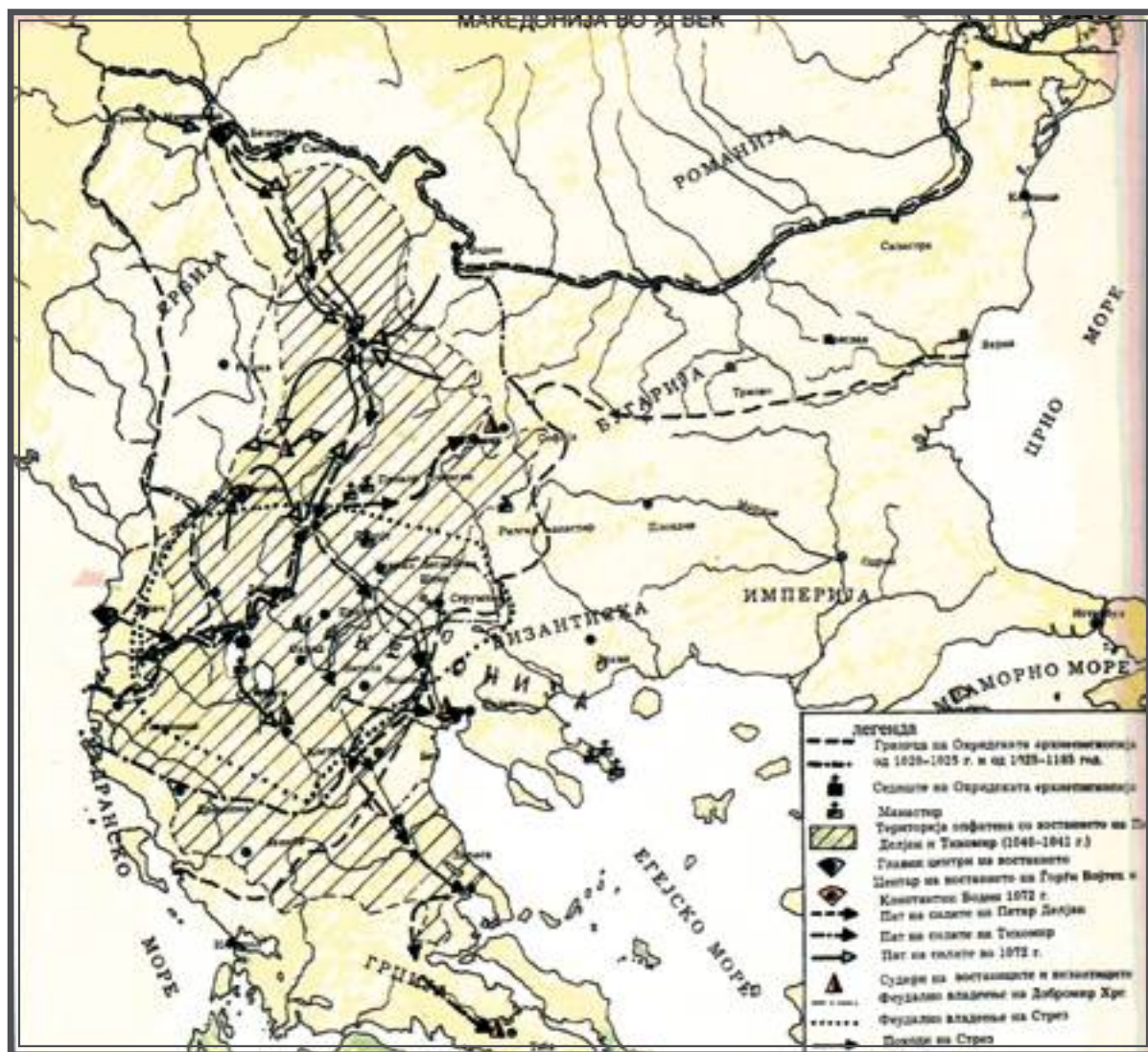


▲ Map of Macedonia in Ancient Times. *Historical Atlas* (Skopje 1997).

attempt to construct a 'Macedonian' identity different from the Greek identity is one from Roman law: *prior tempore, fortior iure* ['earlier in time, therefore stronger in law']. But it is the Greek identity that is of uninterrupted continuation since prehistoric times, and that has come down to its modern legatees, the dwellers in FYROM.

The shift in ideology has also made its way into FYROM's educational system. The more recent school textbooks, in primary and secondary schools, refer constantly to 'Aegean Macedonia' and to the unity of the Macedonian area. In essence, the narration of the country's historical past is entirely based on a linear continuity the axis of which is the geographical area of Macedonia. Everything – from the ancient Macedonians, the Roman and Byzantine past, the Ottoman period, modern times, to the present – centres on Macedonia and its inhabitants. Macedonia is described as a country that has been enslaved and liberated, and today continues its glorious history with FYROM as its vehicle.

Very revealing are the instructions to candidates for university places



▲ Map of Macedonia in the Middle Ages. *Historical Atlas* (Skopje 1992).



▲ Map of Macedonia in Ancient Times. *Historical Atlas* (Skopje 1997).



▲ Blaže Ristovski & team, *Историја за VIII одделение* [History Textbook, Grade VIII] (Skopje 2005), p.120.

in, a directive from the country's Ministry of Education. These instructions require young students to answer questions about the enslavement of 'Macedonians' in neighbouring states, and about their struggle for freedom and union with the mother-homeland. This indoctrination of today's students in FYROM with irredentist dreams lost in the mists of history and antiquity is perhaps the gloomiest aspect of the present situation, for it offers no hope for the future. The ideology of 'Macedonian national identity' is Slav to its very foundations and for six decades the inhabitants of FYROM have been saturated with it. Given that this ideology has caused so many tremors and cracks in the Balkan superstructure, the present weaning of young people in FYROM on a diet of descent from Alexander the Great is not merely quaint: it is positively dangerous.

The 'oppressed Macedonian minority'

The unity of the 'unredeemed but integral Macedonian area' is intimately bound up with the existence of a 'Macedonian minority' - 'oppressed', of course - in adjacent countries. This credo was included, as we have seen, in AFCM's founding meeting; and it has continued unchanged as a feature of political discourse and state policy to saturation point ever since. On 21 December 2006 the President of FYROM was still telling Parliament about his interest in the fate of the 'Macedonian minority' in neighbouring countries. References to 'Macedonian minorities' and FYROM's interest in them recur in the Ministry of Culture's plans for 2004-2008, reinforced by publications on this subject, which is also a publicly stated platform of the ruling party, IMRO [Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization]. It should be noted that the political leaders of the country attend any refugee organization's anniversary celebration without fail, and often deliver inflammatory speeches. President Kiro Gligorov was to be seen at the 2nd Rally of 'Child Refugees from Aegean Macedonia', in Skopje in 1998. Prime Minister Gruevski took part in the 26th Rally of 'Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia', in Trnovo in 1995. The then Foreign Minister, Kazule, was at the 22nd Rally of 'Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia', in Trnovo in 2002.

The emblems and the appropriation of the historical past

When the name of the city of Skopje's airport was changed to 'Alexander the Great', it was just one more straw in the wind. The country continues to print stamps depicting Philip II and Alexander. And on the official Church website emblems are appropriated openly. All this betrays FYROM's need to reposition itself historically and geographically.



◀ Stamp with the Sun of Vergina. Issued by the State Post Office of FYROM in 1992.

This is especially so in school textbooks, where the proposition that the ancient Macedonians were somehow 'different' from the rest of the Greeks is a rigid dogma.



▶ The Sun of Vergina. FYROM school textbook (in photocopy).

Afterword

All that has been said here bears undeniable witness to an irredentist attitude towards Greece among FYROM's organs of state and official foundations. Article 4 of the Interim Accord provided that neither of the two signatories should 'promote or support claims on any part whatever of the dominion of the other, or claims to change the existing boundary'. The interpretation of this clause is, I think, obvious; as obvious as is its violation.

It can be taken as proved, then, that only in the international forum, these last few years, has FYROM troubled to tone down the impression that it is casting envious eyes on Greek territory. But it is also true that, the international shop-window apart, nothing has really changed – either in official political discourse or among the bodies that shape state policy. The objectives on the agenda of AFCM have been religiously observed for sixty years and more, as if time had stood still. And to boot, the new developments in FYROM – the radicalization of irredentist ideology through now wholesale appropriation of the historical past, linking it to the educational process – leave little room for optimism. At the same time, the possibility that FYROM may come up with a wiser and more moderate policy has taken a severe dent from developments over the past ten years, with more and more countries recognizing it as the Republic of Macedonia in a knock-on effect. These developments do not breed much hope or optimism for the future. The only thing that needs be said in conclusion, is that irredentist attitudes and practices of this sort have not even the makings of good-neighbourliness; nor are they founded on international treaties; nor (and that is for certain) do they help find lasting and constructive solutions to the problems endemic in the bilateral relations of FYROM and Greece.